

**IN THE CLAIMS**

1. (Currently Amended) A method of automatically setting a camera exposure level, comprising:

generating a signature of a current ambient luminance level, said signature being indicative of only a portion of an image to be captured by an image sensor; and  
generating an exposure setting in response to said signature;  
wherein said step of generating includes:  
moving a partially transmissive and partially reflective mirror into an attenuation position to lower the ambient light level entering said image sensor during a sampling period  $T_1$ , and moving the partially transmissive and partially reflective mirror into a non-attenuation position to allow the ambient light level to be directly focused onto said image sensor without being attenuated when the ambient light level is less than a given threshold level.

2. (Original) A method of automatically setting a camera exposure level according to claim 1, wherein said step of generating a signature of a current ambient luminance level includes:

capturing an image indicative of said current ambient luminance level;  
sub-dividing the image into a plurality of image areas;  
determining for each image area whether its current ambient luminance level is about a predetermined gray level;  
assigning each image area a binary value indicative of whether a current ambient luminance level associated with a individual image area is about a predetermined Grey level;  
arranging the assigned binary values into a pointer; and  
following said pointer to an exposure setting level appropriate for capturing an object image reflecting the current ambient luminance level.

3. (Original) A method of automatically setting a camera exposure level according to claim 2, wherein said step of generating an exposure setting, includes:

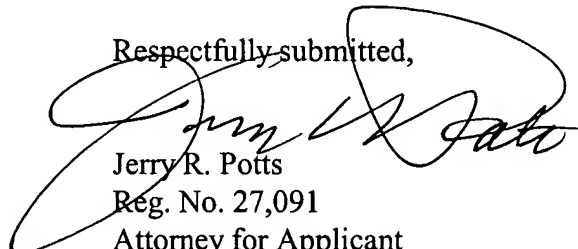
retrieving said exposure setting level; and

setting a gain level indicative of a desired exposure setting.

4. (Original) A method of automatically setting a camera exposure level according to claim 2, wherein said step of sub-dividing the image into a plurality of image areas includes: arranging said plurality of image areas in a matrix.

Cancel claims 5 – 11.

Respectfully submitted,



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